

VZCZCXRO9763
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHRB #0005 0051335
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 051335Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9509
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA IMMEDIATE 4441
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0883

UNCLAS RABAT 000005

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/FO AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: 100,000 IN RABAT PROTEST GAZA ATTACKS; GOM LEADS
ARAB GROUP IN UN

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Perhaps 100,000 or more protesters gathered peacefully in Rabat on January 4, to condemn what they called &the Israeli aggression against Gaza.8 Protesters included top leaders from government, parliament, major political parties and civil society, with heavy participation by students. They demanded an immediate halt to the Israeli incursion and air attacks and called for humanitarian access. The protest focused on Israel and on Arab governments, particularly Egypt, with relatively limited mention of the USG. Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri has gone to New York to join the UN debates. Morocco reportedly was vocal at the UN as leader of the Arab group. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The crowd, numbered by the police as 35,000 to 50,000, was described as over 100,000 demonstrators by credible national media. Organizers claimed involvement of over 1 million, but that may have been a nationwide figure. Among noted participants, were the Ministers of Justice, Finance and Communications, who is also the government spokesman (some reportedly in kaffiyehs), and the Speaker of Parliament's Chamber of Deputies, suggesting that the event had tacit government blessing, but was also under tight control. In fact, protesters remained essentially within the authorized route and time frame and did not venture near the Embassy.

¶3. (U) Protesters vehemently denounced what they called &Arab and international silence and connivance.8 They urged the UN Security Council to protect the Palestinian people and pressure Israel to open the crossing points and let humanitarian aid and medical help into Gaza.

¶4. (U) The ire of the crowd was directed primarily towards Israel but also towards Egyptian President Mubarak for having &sold Gaza for (U.S.) dollars8. There was little direct criticism of the U.S., unlike in the 2006 Lebanon war. The newspaper published by the Prime Minister El Fassi's nationalist Istiqlal party headlined, however: "The genocide continues with the green light of the USA and the West." Among the more colorful expressions were the burning of the Israeli flag and the brandishing of shoes.

¶5. (SBU) There have been other protests around the country. Students apparently spontaneously mobilized to launch numerous school strikes and marches over the past week in towns both large and small, according to resident Americans. More formal organized demonstrations elsewhere were reportedly banned or quickly dispersed.

¶6. (SBU) Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri has arrived in New York as a member of the high-level Arab League delegation to the UN. Morocco also reportedly is the rotating chair of the UN Arab group. In that capacity, its PermRep was reported as having given a strong speech calling for an end to the attacks and the blockade of Gaza.

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

Riley